

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) A method of manufacturing a honeycomb structure comprising the steps of:

making a clay by mixing and kneading a silicon carbide powder raw material, a metal silicon raw material, an organic binder, and a raw material containing alkaline earth metal;

forming the clay to form a formed body; and

pre-firing and firing the formed body,

wherein the firing is performed in a protective container made of silicon carbide in which a solid containing aluminum is placed,

wherein the solid containing aluminum is composed of a fire-resistant block body having water absorption equal to or above 0.05%.

4-8. (Canceled)

9. (New) The method of manufacturing a honeycomb structure according to claim 3,

wherein the solid containing aluminum is placed such that a separation distance from the body to be fired is equal to or below 50 cm.

10. (New) The method of manufacturing a honeycomb structure according to claim 3,

wherein the solid containing aluminum contains aluminum equal to or above 1% in terms of a weight composition ratio in oxide equivalent.